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REPORT ON RURAL ECONOMIC SURVEY IN UNITED KHASI-JAINTIA HILLS.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 **Objective.**—Consequent upon restrictions on trade emerging in the border stations after partition, the economic condition of the people living in the border areas of the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills district adjoining East Pakistan, suffered a serious set back. There was demand from the people all over the border areas for adequate relief as well as rehabilitation of their shattered economy. From time to time Government took up various relief measures but, for adopting a planned programme of relief and rehabilitation in an integrated and sustained manner, the need for a comprehensive economic survey of the district with special emphasis on the border areas came to the forefront. Accordingly on the instance of Government of Assam, the Department of Economics and Statistics addressed itself to the task of launching an economic survey in the district.

The programme consisted of an intensive study of the conditions in selected villages and was designed to meet the following objectives:— (i) To obtain a broad picture of the rural economic conditions in the district and in particular, to provide factual data on the various aspects of agriculture and farm economics e.g., land tenure, size and distribution of agricultural holdings and farms, fragmentation, income and expenditure, occupation and the like. Data should be collected also on the occupations and industries which play subsidiary roles in the economy of the district. (ii) Special emphasis need be given on border areas, in order to bring to light the measure of suffering of the border people as a result of partition and to suggest various long and short term measures for ameliorating the condition of the border people. (iii) The survey should adequately cover the Community Development areas also in order that it becomes feasible to make an assessment of the impact of the community development programmes on the socio-economic life of the people in these areas.

1.2 **Coverage and Period.**—The field work of the survey was started on 28th February, 1958 and was completed by the middle of July, 1958 thus requiring nearly four and a half months.

1.3 **Design of the Survey.**—For a study of border economy a purposive selection of ten villages in the border area, which were known to be important from the point of view of production and distributive trade in pre-partition days was made. Similarly for project areas a total of eight villages two from each of the four blocks in the district—where intensive development programmes were taken up, were selected. These villages were selected by the Project Officers themselves. Apart from these, a random sample of ten villages from all over the district were taken. Thus a total of 28 villages all over district—10 from border areas, 8 from project areas and 10 from general areas selected for

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1.3 Investigation. The sample size of ten villages only out of a total 1802 villages in the general areas of the district is indeed, very small, which nevertheless had to be restricted to commensurate with the availability of time and field staff at our disposal and in consideration of the difficulty of conducting field work in the remote interiors of a hill district, where communication facilities lack so badly.

1.4 Plan of Investigation.—Plan of investigation may be considered as consisting of two parts viz.—

(1) The general investigation was confined mainly to the border areas. This consisted in holding meeting of villagers in the selected villages, discussing the various important problems facing them and recording their suggestions for improving their lot. Apart from meeting the villagers, problems were also discussed with the important people of the locality.

Schedules—Schedule I.—This schedule was meant for collection of village statistics relating to various facilities offered by the village, namely—communication, health, recreation, education, marketing, cottage industries and the like.

Schedule II.—This was the most important schedule for collection of information on the economic aspect of the families. This was canvassed in all the families of the selected villages. The more important items on which informations were collected through this schedule were :—

Block V: Demographic particulars of household, occupational and employment pattern.

Block VI: Household indebtedness.

Block VII: Land-holding and farm.

Block VIII & IX: Implements and Livestock.

Block X & XI: Household expenditure.

Block XII: Receipts and disbursement of the household.

Schedule III.—Listing of household and occupation.

Special Schedule.—This was canvassed in all the households of the villages selected from Community Project areas. This was intended to collect information on adoption by households of various improved agricultural practices advocated through the Community Development programme and for assessment of the extent of public participation and co-operation in developmental works. Information was also collected on agricultural assistance received by households.

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1.3 **Method of collection of data and field organisation.**—For the collection of data personal interview method was adopted. Actual investigation in the villages was done by Inspectors and Primary Investigators of the Department of Economics and Statistics. The District Statistical Officer was put directly in-charge of the investigation. He maintained general supervision, direction and control of their day-to-day work. The officers from headquarters also exercised overall supervision and inspection. Before starting the actual field work, the Director of Statistics, apart from personally visiting the border areas and selecting the villages for investigation in consultation with knowledgeable people of the locality, addressed letters to the District Council for rendering all necessary help who in turn instructed all the Members of the District Council and village Sirdars to extend their co-operation to the field staff. We take the opportunity of recording here our deep appreciation of the valuable help we received from various officials and non-officials in the conduct of the survey.

It is obvious that the success of such a survey under acutely difficult situations faced in the inaccessible and backward hilly areas, entirely depends on the intellectual honesty and technical efficiency of the field staff as well as on their ability to call up the required amount of co-operation from all concerned. Though we could reasonably claim a high standard as regards the former category of requirement, the latter consideration presented itself as a tremendously difficult task as, the villagers—almost free from any tax or other obligation to the government—could not but receive this work with feelings of suspicion and resentment in as much as it did involve some questions relating to land, income and expenditure, etc. It cost us a large amount of effort to keep the fund of suspicion at bay. We had to hold meetings in each village and devote considerable time to convince the people that this was in no way connected with any taxation measure.

1.4 **Interim Report.**—In view of the urgency of the border problem, particularly the setting up of Border Rehabilitation Committee for suggesting ways and means for rehabilitation of the border economy, we instructed to submit an interim report on border economy to the committee on the basis of investigation completed only in five border villages in April, 1958.

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CHAPTER VI

LAND

6.1 The total area covered by the ... for want of relevant village records as ... surveyed for settlement purposes. Havi... of land and land utilisation pertaining ... entirely on the accounts given by famil... care was taken to ensure reliability as ... of land given by families were verified ... most cases they were found to tally ... land relieved hereafter relates only to ... ample villages is not available ... e district is not culturable ... an alternative no matter ... a family we had to depend ... concerned. However, every ... to a number of cases accounts ... by actual measurements. In ... approximately. The slightly excess ... agricultural land.

HOLDING

6.2 "Holding" usually means the ... or family has permanent and heritable ... peculiar land tenure system prevailing ... which has already been given in the ... ion had to be modified to fit in with ... district and accordingly the holding of ... means to comprise of all lands held as ... Raj System or under settlement through ... land over which the individual ... right of occupancy. Due to ... this district, an account of ... cultivatory chapter, this definition ... the system obtaining in the ... individual or family was ... given property or held under ... Deputy Council.

The total area covered by land holdings of all sizes in the Border ... area, Project area and General area ... are respectively 4944.48 ... acres, 1991.42 acres and 613.24 acres ... with 1930, 847 and 184 ... families in the respective samples. The average size of ... holding per family works out respectively ... 2.5 acres, 2.3 acres, and ... 2.3 acres in Border area, Project area ... General area and holding ... per head 1.48 acres, 0.63 acres and 0.7 ... acres respectively. The real ... situation on the structure of family holdings, however, will be better ... understood from an examination of the distribution of the holdings ... according to their size as presented in the following table.